

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
for funding Project Longevity
HB 5037: An Act Adjusting State Budget for FY 2023
Feb 18, 2022 | 5:00 pm | Zoom**



CT
Against
Gun
Violence

**Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France
and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:**

I am testifying in support of the budget increase to **Project Longevity** as included in the Governor's proposed budget for the Fiscal Year ending in June 2023 (line T93)

This past year, gun homicides were the highest in 25 years, with 118 Homicides in Connecticut. The Hartford Courant declared that 2021 was the deadliest year in Hartford since 2003, with 35 homicides. In 2020 gun homicides increased 50% in Connecticut compared to 2019. We must invest more in reducing community gun violence using proven programs like Project Longevity.

The public health crisis of gun violence disproportionately affects communities of color. Gun shooting incidents, homicide and injury in Connecticut disproportionately affects black and brown communities, especially in our largest cities. Approximately 56% of the state's gun homicide victims are black; however, only 10% of the state's population is black. Similarly, Latinx people account for approximately 23% of gun homicide victims, although they account for only 14% of the population. Young black men in Connecticut are almost 39 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than white men. If we want to achieve racial justice, we must make people safe in the communities where they live. To do so requires funding programs like Project Longevity that have proven track records of reducing gun violence.

The Project Longevity model which is a Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy, also referred to as Focused Deterrence or Ceasefire, has been studied for years and has been proven effective through evidence derived from more than 60 peer reviewed studies. Project Longevity has been cited as an impactful model by the Giffords Law Center, Yale University, and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

According to reports from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, homicides in New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport dropped from 75 in 2011 to 31 in 2016, a reduction of more than 50 percent. Statewide, gun homicides in Connecticut fell by 16 percent from 2010-2015 compared to a 14 percent rise nationally.

Project Longevity in New Haven was associated with a reduction of nearly five group member involved shootings and homicides per month, according to a Yale, University of Texas study; Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, Connecticut (2016)

The Giffords Law Center estimates the directly measurable costs of gun violence to be more than \$400 million annually. In total, including the cost of pain and suffering, it's estimated that the annual cost of gun violence in Connecticut is a staggering \$1.2 billion. Additionally, the Law Center, which grade states on the strength of its gun laws suggests that CT could strengthen its ability to reduce gun violence "continuing to strengthen investments in community violence intervention programs."

<https://giffords.org/lawcenter/resources/scorecard/#CT>

While fully funding Project Longevity is important, the State also needs to invest more in preventing community gun violence that disproportionately impacts black and brown communities in Connecticut. GVI strategies are most effective when they are working

with community-based programs. That is why we are asking you to support a state-level Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention, a state-level grant-making authority tasked with funding and implementing evidence-informed, community-centric, programs and strategies to reduce street-level gun violence. Dedicated staff resources with multi-disciplinary expertise and budget line funding would:

- Determine community-level needs by engaging with community leaders, elected officials and others with a stake in the health and safety of Connecticut's urban centers.
- Establish grant criteria and eligibility, and secure state, federal and other monies to provide stable funding to supported programs.
- Award grants, guide implementation and offer technical expertise to maximize successful program outcomes.
- Monitor and report on results to ensure program grant objectives are met.
- Identify, study and assess the efficacy of groups like Project Longevity, and potential new community-based program models.

This type of strategy, to invest in community-based solutions to gun violence has been successfully implemented in states like California, Maryland, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. These states have invested millions of dollars into preventing community gun violence. Unfortunately, Project Longevity is currently the only dedicated gun violence prevention strategy that is consistently funded by the State. More must be done, and CT must once again lead on this issue, by increasing its commitment to these communities, and funding evidence-based solutions to reducing gun violence.

Investing more in community-based violence prevention programs would not only save lives and reduce the trauma inflicted on these communities, but it would also save money for taxpayers, by reducing the staggering cost of gun violence.

I support more funding for gun violence prevention programs and urge you to fully fund the Office of Policy and Management budget for Project Longevity. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Stein
Executive Director
CT Against Gun Violence

